



ABSTRACT

OF THE 2006 ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION
PLAN FOR OLDER AMERICANS ACT, NEW
YORK STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR
THE ELDERLY, AND EXPANDED IN-HOME
SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY PROGRAMS.

Introduction

Erie County government has embarked on an effort to dramatically change the way in which human services are delivered to the residents of our county. This initiative, known as the "Blueprint for Change", is designed to improve the coordination and management of human services which includes services to senior citizens. One of the significant components of this proposed restructuring will be the creation of a Division of Senior and Adult Services under the Department of Human Services.

The Division of Senior and Adult Services (SAS) will maintain the existing services and functions of the current Department of Senior Services, including its legal role as the Area Agency on Aging for Erie County. However, the purpose of the Division of Senior and Adult Services will be expanded to one of planning and coordinating a single point of entry to long term care services for persons age 18 and over without regard to age or disability. This initiative is consistent with New York State's plans to create "single points of entry" for long term care services in each county and the task of designing such a plan locally will be done in concert with the Erie County Department of Human Services and other divisions under it.

We realize that full implementation of the Blueprint for Change is an ambitious undertaking and will entail a phased in, multi-year effort. However, in no way will this initiative reduce our commitment to serving older adults in Erie County and it is our intent to actually expand services resulting from program cost reductions and the consolidation of services. I look forward to your continued support of our overall mission to maximize the independence of Erie County's older residents.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Krawczyk,
Commissioner

Top Priorities for 2006

- To complete the implementation of the Blueprint for Change recommendations for the integration of the Adult Protective Services and Protective Services for Older Adults Units.
- To integrate separate functions of the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) for all ages into a single unit within the newly created Division of Senior and Adult Services.
- To start the process that will integrate the Community Alternative Systems Agency (CASA) and the Nursing Home division operating currently under the Department of Social Services into the Division of Senior and Adult Services (SAS).
- To implement an education and outreach program designed to enroll seniors into the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan with an emphasis on assisting individuals eligible for the low-income subsidy and those currently enrolled in the New York State funded Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Program (EPIC).
- To establish a Long Term care Resource Center in SAS that will inform and educate the general public about long term care insurance options including those available through the New York State Partnership for Long Term Care.

As the Area Agency on Aging, it is the role of the Division of Senior and Adult Services (SAS) to advocate on behalf of older persons by monitoring, evaluating, and commenting on policies, programs and community actions which affect the elderly; by representing the interests and concerns of the elderly to public officials and others; and by coordinating planning with other agencies and organizations to promote new and expanded benefits and opportunities. All SAS activities on behalf of the elderly are intended to improve service coordination, to reduce confusion, fragmentation or duplication in service delivery, or to improve utilization and effectiveness in the services provided.

This Abstract summarizes the goals, objectives and priorities of the Department relevant to fulfilling these functions during 2006.

A. GOALS

In accord with the goals of the New York State Office for the Aging, SAS addresses its activities to the following goals:

1. To promote public policy, legislation, and private sector initiatives which address the needs and priorities of older people.

2. To improve access to all available services and benefits, and to insure delivery of quality services to all elderly people, especially those who are in greatest social and economic need.
3. To promote the development of a coordinated and comprehensive system of services for the elderly, especially those with greatest needs, so that they may remain in their own homes and participate fully in family and community life.
4. To improve the overall management and operation of the Division of Senior and Adult Services.
5. To promote affirmative action in employment, in utilization of women and minority owned/operated business enterprises, and in service delivery to minority, frail, disabled, and other targeted elderly persons.
6. To assist older adults in meeting their energy needs with respect to financial assistance and energy conservation.
7. To promote older adult's access to long term care services, especially case management and transportation, through the coordination of critical services at the state and local level.
8. To promote health and disease prevention by enhancing awareness, changing behavior, and creating environments that support wellness and good health practices.
9. To improve the availability of legal services to the elderly.

B. ADVOCACY

SAS will support actions that reform the long term care service delivery system and assist New York State to comply with the US Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision. These reforms will assist disabled adults by providing additional choices for home and community-based care.

SAS will strive to advocate for changes in public policy to further promote the independence and optimum well-being for older adults.

The Division will continue to advocate for increased funding to federal Older Americans Act programs. Particular attention will be directed toward the expansion of services under the Family Caregiver Support component of the Act.

SAS will continue to work with organizations such as the Buffalo

Community Center Collaborative and the RSVP Volunteer Transportation Project to explore ways to expand transportation services to the senior and disabled population through the identification of new resources and the more efficient use of existing services.

In response to dramatic increases in gas prices, the Division will also advocate for increased resources to the major state-funded home and community-based programs for the elderly with an emphasis on the Community Services for the Elderly (CSE), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In addition, SAS will advocate for the passage of bi-partisan legislative bills introduced in the New York State Senate and Assembly that empower the New York State Office for the Aging to apply for federal waivers to expand home and community-based services, develop consumer directed service delivery initiatives, and related alternatives to institutional long term care.

SAS will maintain an active participation on various boards and interdisciplinary planning and coordinating projects in an effort to promote the interests of older adults. These include the Erie County Caregiver Coalition, Erie and Niagara Tobacco Free Coalition, Coalition for Healthcare Decision Making, WNY Adult Immunization Coalition, Partners for Prevention, the Erie County Physical Activity Coalition, the New York State Coalition on Adult Abuse, the Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence, and the Multidisciplinary Coordinating Council on Elder Abuse to name a few. Examples of this form of advocacy include improvement of employment opportunities for mature job seekers through active participation on the Buffalo and Erie County Work Force Investment Board and participation in an initiative sponsored by the Coalition for Healthcare Decision Making to promote advance care planning.

SAS will advocate for the mandatory training and education of medical and criminal justice professionals about aging related issues such as elder abuse. Collaborative efforts to educate professionals from these disciplines will continue along with efforts to develop and implement policies, protocols, and procedures that serve victims of elder abuse.

C. PLANNING AND COORDINATION

Efforts begun in 2005 to improve the quality and level of transportation services provided by the Going Places system in response to budget cuts will continue in the coming year. SAS will participate in related County management initiatives that seek to

reduce costs through better coordination of transportation services. During 2006, SAS will continue to pursue a public/private initiative designed to generate revenue necessary to sustain and enhance the Going Places Transportation Service. This venture will enable the Division to utilize the Going Places vans as a form of mobile advertising for private sector companies and thus expand our ability to obtain revenue that will support the transportation for the elderly program in Erie County.

We will begin the sixth phase of the Administration on Aging's Performance Outcome Measures Project (POMP). During 2006, the focus will be on identifying "predictor variables" that track changes in the functional level of home care recipients.

We will maintain our involvement in the ongoing planning process that is underway to implement a comprehensive information and referral system using the 211 telephone number.

SAS will consolidate all of its outreach activities including those provided by the ALPHA Program under the Division's Information and Assistance Unit.

We will continue providing information to older adults and their caregivers on matters pertaining to health promotion and disease prevention and work to coordinate with other community-wide efforts with organizations such as the Wellness Council, Physical Activity Coalition, Tobacco-Free Coalition, the Coalition for Health Care Decision Making, and the Kinship Care Consortium.

SAS will maintain a leadership role on the Erie County Older Driver Family Assistance Help Network and seek to implement components of the American Society on Aging's Road Map to Driving Wellness curriculum.

The Division's Protective Services Unit will continue working with the Homeless Alliance of Western New York and explore the feasibility of developing an emergency transitional housing program targeted to victims of elder abuse.

The role of the Division's Caregiver Resources Center will be expanded further and activities to better inform the elderly and their caregivers about SAS's services will be strengthened. This will include updating and improving information dissemination to the public and service providers via its enhanced website at www.erie.gov/depts/seniorservices/ and the Caregiver Coalition's website at www.eriecountycaregiver.org

SAS will continue to demonstrate a leadership role in the development of training for case managers who work with the elderly in Erie County. Plans are underway to offer training on various mental health issues to case management and adult protective services staff in cooperation with Jewish Family Services.

During 2006, we will expand the highly successful "Powerful Tools" seminars designed for people who are caring for older relatives or friends. Several SAS staff will be trained by Mather Lifeways under Legacy Health Systems at Stanford University to become certified master trainers in order to train others who will be able to offer Powerful Tools classes in their respective communities. Efforts will be initiated to more effectively reach caregivers within the minority community.

In 2006, SAS will expand the use of its client tracking software program known as Q, to meet the standards for reporting to the State and the Administration on Aging and will increase the automation of various internal management operations.

SAS will seek additional resources to build upon the lessons learned from the 2005 Partnership for Falls Prevention project. Seniors will continue to be assessed for falls risk potential and efforts will be made to intervene earlier through the implementation of home modifications and exercise activities

We will work toward the development of strategies which address the critical shortage of personal care aides in the home care and health care industries. The Division looks to expand shared aide services within senior housing complexes, and work with the Caregiver Coalition to address the worker shortage problems.

In response to demographic shifts and limited resources, SAS will continue to evaluate its nutrition programs and redeploy resources where warranted, phase out sites experiencing chronic attendance problems, while opening new sites in areas that have identified a growing need for congregate services.

The Nutrition Unit will build upon and expand the partnerships and collaborative efforts that have been established with community organizations such as the American Diabetes Association. It will also continue to expand upon the enthusiastic acceptance of the integration of the senior fitness component into the Stay Fit Dining Congregate Nutrition Program. This will be accomplished by recruiting new volunteer fitness trainers and the subsequent addition of new sites to the weekly roster of fitness classes. In 2006, SAS will respond to requests from other counties within New York State and North Carolina to provide information about

replicating the senior fitness component of the congregate dining program in their communities.

The Division's Wise and Well Program will work with the SUNY at Buffalo's School of Pharmacy, the Stay Fit Dining Program and the Health Insurance Information and Assistance Program to implement a pilot project designed to educate seniors about the safe use of prescription drugs, over the counter medications, and various supplements.

We will continue to work with the Department of Mental Health and community providers to identify ways to better meet the behavioral health needs of older adults.

D. SERVICE OBJECTIVES

In line with the above considerations, the Division will maintain current programs, making changes as needed. These services include:

1. Access Services

To evaluate and improve methods of providing information and assistance to persons 60+ and their families, and to offer information to the general community on needs of and services to the elderly.

To continue outreach activities to link older persons to community services, benefits, and entitlements.

To facilitate and assist in the development of a county-wide, door to door van service designed to assist older adults who are unable to utilize conventional means of transportation to access health, nutrition, and income maintenance services.

To maintain a county-wide system of case management services for the elderly that operates with the cooperation of community-based agencies.

2. In-Home Services

To maintain the level of in-home services available to functionally impaired older persons, including homemaker/personal care and housekeeper services.

To continue to provide, under contract with community agencies, chore maintenance, friendly visiting, and

telephone assurance services.

To continue to provide home-delivered meal services for frail and handicapped persons unable to prepare adequate nutritious meals on their own in cooperation with the Buffalo and Erie County Meals on Wheels, Inc. and the Southtowns Meals on Wheels programs.

3. Congregate Services

To provide hot noonday meals to the elderly at 48 dining sites throughout the county and continue to expand service to underserved rural and urban seniors.

To provide nutrition education and healthy meal preparation demonstrations to older adults.

To expand upon existing efforts which enhance the quality of congregate dining sites and increase participation levels. This will include the increased involvement with the University at Buffalo's Dietetic Program. Student interns will assist by providing nutrition education to congregate dining participants.

The highly successful Farmer's Market Coupon initiative will be continued providing low and moderate income seniors with fresh fruits and vegetables during the summer months.

To continue the social model adult day care program offered through Catholic Charities, as well as providing adult day care as a respite program for care givers of frail and impaired elderly.

4. Legal Services

To continue to provide legal advice and representation to older persons and to grandparents and relatives age 60 and over who serve as primary caregivers of children age 17 and through a contract with Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled or Disadvantaged of WNY.

5. Other Services

To maintain the provision of Protective Services for Older Adults, including case management, financial management, guardianship, and in-home services to older persons at particular risk of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

To continue operation of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, contributing thousands of hours of volunteer services to community organizations and to increase the number of volunteers in "high impact" sites such as such as child literacy and community revitalization. RSVP will also work to increase the diversity within the active volunteer pool to better reflect the changing demographics in Erie County. In addition, RSVP will strive to increase opportunities for volunteers with higher level skills and interested in applying them in community service settings. Work will continue with the faculty from the SUNY at Buffalo's Emeritus Center to promote lifelong learning opportunities within Erie County's Senior Centers.

The RSVP will continue to work with the newly formed Volunteer Transportation Coalition and will help develop safety guidelines for developing a volunteer transportation program.

To expand employment opportunities for older adults through the coordination of resources available to Supportive Services Corporation(SSC) and the Senior Jobs, Senior Aides, and Senior Community Service Employment Programs, as well as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). SCC employment and training activities will include on-line use of the NYS Department of Labor One-Stop Operating System providing instantaneous job match privileges for the benefit of the mature job seeker.

To maintain, in conjunction with Catholic Charities of Buffalo, the Housing and Supportive Services Program, assisting older persons to meet their basic housing needs.

To continue the HOPE for Elderly Independence Program in cooperation with the Belmont Shelter Corp. to provide supportive services and rental assistance to eligible frail elderly.

To maintain, in conjunction with the Elizabeth Pierce-Olmsted, MD Center for the Visually Impaired (formerly the Blind Association of WNY) Senior Vision Services, providing assessment, counseling, and aid to elderly with vision impairments.

To support the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program operated by the American Red Cross assisting older persons in nursing homes to resolve problems.

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Copies of the Annual Implementation Plan will be available for review after January 2, 2006. Written comments regarding the plans for services to older adults contained in this Abstract will be accepted until November 18, 2005. For further information, please contact the Erie County Division of Senior and Adult Services, 95 Franklin Street, Room 1329, Buffalo, New York 14202-3968, (716)858-7253.

November 4, 2005